



SUKRITAVAANI

October 2026

Dear friends,
Greetings!!

Our society's awareness and more importantly, its understanding of accessibility and the challenges faced by persons with disabilities still seems to be at a very nascent stage.

Last month, I visited Bengaluru twice as Sukriti Social Foundation was one of the eight finalists for the prestigious N. S. Hema Memorial Award for the Best Institution Working for Persons with Disabilities, instituted by the Association of Persons with Disability (APD), Bengaluru.

On both occasions, our stay was at places that were conveniently located but, unfortunately, not designed with persons with disabilities in mind. Before confirming our stay, we had specifically enquired about accessibility. The response was an enthusiastic, "Yes, yes, you can come! It's accessible." However, on reaching the venue, we realized that *accessibility* meant nothing more than having a ramp at the entrance. The washrooms and lifts were not designed to meet our needs. One of the places had been recently renovated, while the other had been inaugurated only recently. Yet, both fell short in pretty much the same way. Having reached the place, we managed, as we have learnt to do all our lives. What troubled me, however, was not how we managed, but why the understanding of accessibility remains so limited among people who are responsible for creating and maintaining our built environment.

Our experience with air travel added to our concerns

We travelled to Bengaluru and back on two different airlines. It is encouraging that airlines are now allowing passengers to use their own wheelchairs up to the aircraft, as is practiced in many other countries. However, the handling of my wheelchair on the onward journey was far from reassuring. On our onward journey, I received my wheelchair practically in pieces! The armrest had come off, and the footrests were scattered in different corners. I was terribly anxious. How could I attend an award function with one side of my armrest missing?

Fortunately, we managed to locate the missing screw and temporarily fix the armrest using a hair clip as a makeshift screwdriver. We are always in the habit of finding improvised solution to all unexpected problem, but it also highlighted how vulnerable our mobility aids can be when they are not handled with the care they deserve. However on our return journey, the other airlines treated my wheelchair with utmost respect packing it in a bag and safely delivering it.

The award results were not announced in advance, and we waited with bated breath for the outcome. Unfortunately, we missed the award by a narrow margin.

Had we won, perhaps these inconveniences would have faded into the background amid the celebrations. But the narrow loss gave us an opportunity to reflect on our experiences, and these conversations kept returning to one important question: Why is awareness of accessibility still so poor among the very stakeholders who shape our built environment?

Accessibility is not merely about constructing a ramp or providing a wheelchair-friendly entrance. It is about being able to use a washroom independently, access every essential floor of a building, travel safely with one's mobility aid, and move through everyday spaces with dignity. It is about being able to participate in society without having to negotiate a fresh set of barriers at every step.

Perhaps it is time for us at Sukriti Social Foundation to expand our efforts and work more actively towards creating awareness about accessibility. The children we support today deserve a future in which they will not have to struggle with the same barriers that we continue to face. We must work towards a world where accessibility is anticipated at the planning stage, rather than improvised after a person with a disability arrives.

And yet, there are encouraging signs of change too

In Chennai, my attempts to travel by private cabs, mostly sedans or hatchback, have often ended in disappointment. After the cab arrives, the driver realises that the boot cannot accommodate my wheelchair, as many of these vehicles run on CNG and have limited boot space. Unfortunately, drivers are often unwilling to accommodate the wheelchair in the front passenger seat, leaving us with little choice but to cancel the ride.

My experience with Namma Yatri in Bengaluru was refreshingly different. The app itself provides an option to indicate the need for special assistance. The drivers I encountered were understanding and willing to find a way to accommodate my wheelchair, whether in the overhead carrier or on the seat beside the driver. That willingness to help, without making the situation uncomfortable, made a real difference. There was also no added cost for this.

These small but meaningful experiences remind us that change is possible. Technology can help, but what truly makes the difference is awareness, sensitivity and a willingness to understand another person's needs.

We have certainly come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

At Sukriti, we will continue doing our part—not only to help children overcome their physical challenges, but also to advocate for a society that removes the barriers around them.

Because true inclusion begins when accessibility is no longer treated as a favour, but recognised as a fundamental necessity.

With best regards
Sowmya Simhan

Support our work

UPI ID: sukritisocial@mahb

Net banking:

Sukriti Social Foundation

SB A/C No: 20017963656

Bank of Maharashtra

Mount Road Branch
IFSC Code: MAHB0000400

Donate



Copyright (C) |2025|SUKRITI SOCIAL FOUNDATION|. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address
getintouch@sukriti.org

Our website
<https://www.sukriti.org/>

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)

